Appendix C
Adjunct Melter Vitrification Process

C.1 ADJUNCT MELTER AS AN IMMOBILIZATION TECHNOLOGY VARIANT

The adjunct melter vitrification process was identified in the *Storage and Disposition of Weapons-Usable Fissile Materials Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Storage and Disposition PEIS)* (DOE 1996) as a possible technology variant for immobilizing surplus plutonium. It is a homogenous immobilization approach similar to the new, stand-alone vitrification facility evaluated in the *Storage and Disposition PEIS*, except that the approach would use some existing facilities and infrastructure at the Savannah River Site (SRS).

In the adjunct melter approach, plutonium would be immobilized, using modified facilities in Building 221–F, into a borosilicate glass frit that would be temporarily stored in individual cans. This frit would be mixed in the new adjunct melter facility with high-level waste (HLW) supplied from the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF). The blended feed would be melted and poured into DWPF canisters to produce a radiation field in the final product that would meet the Spent Fuel Standard (UC 1996).

C.2 EVALUATION OF IMMOBILIZATION TECHNOLOGY VARIANTS

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) examined six immobilization technology variants to determine the more promising variants for further development. The six variants were divided into two categories—the external radiation barrier approach and internal radiation barrier approach—as follows:

I. External barrier (Can-in-canister variants)	1. Ceramic immobilization in existing facilities 2. Glass immobilization in existing facilities
II. Internal barrier (Homogenous variants)	3. Vitrification in new, stand-alone facilities 4. Vitrification with an adjunct melter in existing (DWPF at SRS) and new facilities 5. Ceramic immobilization in new, stand-alone facilities 6. Electrometallurgical treatment in existing and new facilities

Nine evaluation criteria, similar to those used in the screening of alternatives for analysis in the *Storage and Disposition PEIS*, were used to qualitatively evaluate the six immobilization technology variants:

1. Resistance to theft and diversion by unauthorized parties
2. Resistance to retrieval, extraction, and reuse by host nation
3. Technical viability
4. Environmental, safety, and health compliance
5. Cost effectiveness
6. Timeliness
7. Fostering progress and cooperation with Russia and other countries
8. Public and institutional acceptance
9. Additional benefits

The evaluation concluded that the external barrier variants would be superior to the internal barrier variants in terms of timeliness, higher technical viability, much lower costs, and, to a lesser extent, slightly lower environmental and health risks (UC 1997). As a result of this evaluation, the can-in-canister variants (1 and 2) were considered reasonable alternatives for analysis in the *Surplus Plutonium Disposition Environmental Impact Statement* (SPD EIS) and are compared with the homogenous vitrification and ceramic immobilization facilities (3 and 5) evaluated in the *Storage and Disposition PEIS*. DOE decided, in the Record of Decision for the *Storage and Disposition PEIS*, not to pursue the electrometallurgical treatment option (6) because its technology is less mature than vitrification or ceramic immobilization. Although use of the adjunct melter (4) may be viable from a technical standpoint, it would cost twice as much as the can-in-canister approach and would take 1 to 5 years longer to implement. Based on the relative sizes of the facilities, their use of existing facilities and infrastructure, and the processing steps associated with their operation, specific environmental impacts associated with the adjunct melter approach would be expected to result in environmental impacts ranging between those of the new facility (homogenous) variants and the two can-in-canister variants. The adjunct melter's lack of an environmental advantage combined with its timeliness, cost, and technical shortcomings make it less reasonable than the can-in-canister approach. Thus, it is not included as a reasonable alternative for detailed environmental analysis in the SPD EIS. For completeness, a description of the vitrification process using the adjunct melter with DWPF at SRS is provided below.

C.3 ADJUNCT MELTER VITRIFICATION PROCESS

A simplified flow diagram using a new adjunct melter at SRS is shown in Figure C–1. The disposition process would begin with the conversion of feed materials to plutonium oxide at Building 221–F. This oxide would be blended by a dry feed preparation process to prepare a consistent feedstock and fed into a melter along with glass frit to initiate the first stage of vitrification. The first-stage melter would dissolve the plutonium oxide into the borosilicate glass and convert the mixture to a frit containing about 10 percent plutonium by weight. The assumed nominal feed of plutonium over the life of the adjunct melter vitrification process would be 50 t (55 tons) over a 10-year period.

The plutonium glass frit would then be stored in small steel cans and transported as needed to the new adjunct melter facility adjacent to DWPF. Standard DWPF operations receive two main feedlines from the SRS HLW tank farms to be vitrified—a washed tank sludge and an aqueous HLW precipitate that contains highly radioactive cesium 137. In the adjunct melter process, some of the aqueous HLW precipitate would be diverted from the DWPF, via an interarea pipeline, to the adjunct melter facility. At the adjunct melter facility, the plutonium glass frit would be mixed with DWPF frit and the aqueous HLW precipitate in a melter feed tank, and slurry fed to the melter, producing a homogenous glass melt that would then be poured into DWPF canisters. The surplus plutonium contained in the canisters would be dissolved in the glass and uniformly integrated with fission products. The canisters would then be stored on the site awaiting final disposal at a geologic repository pursuant to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act.

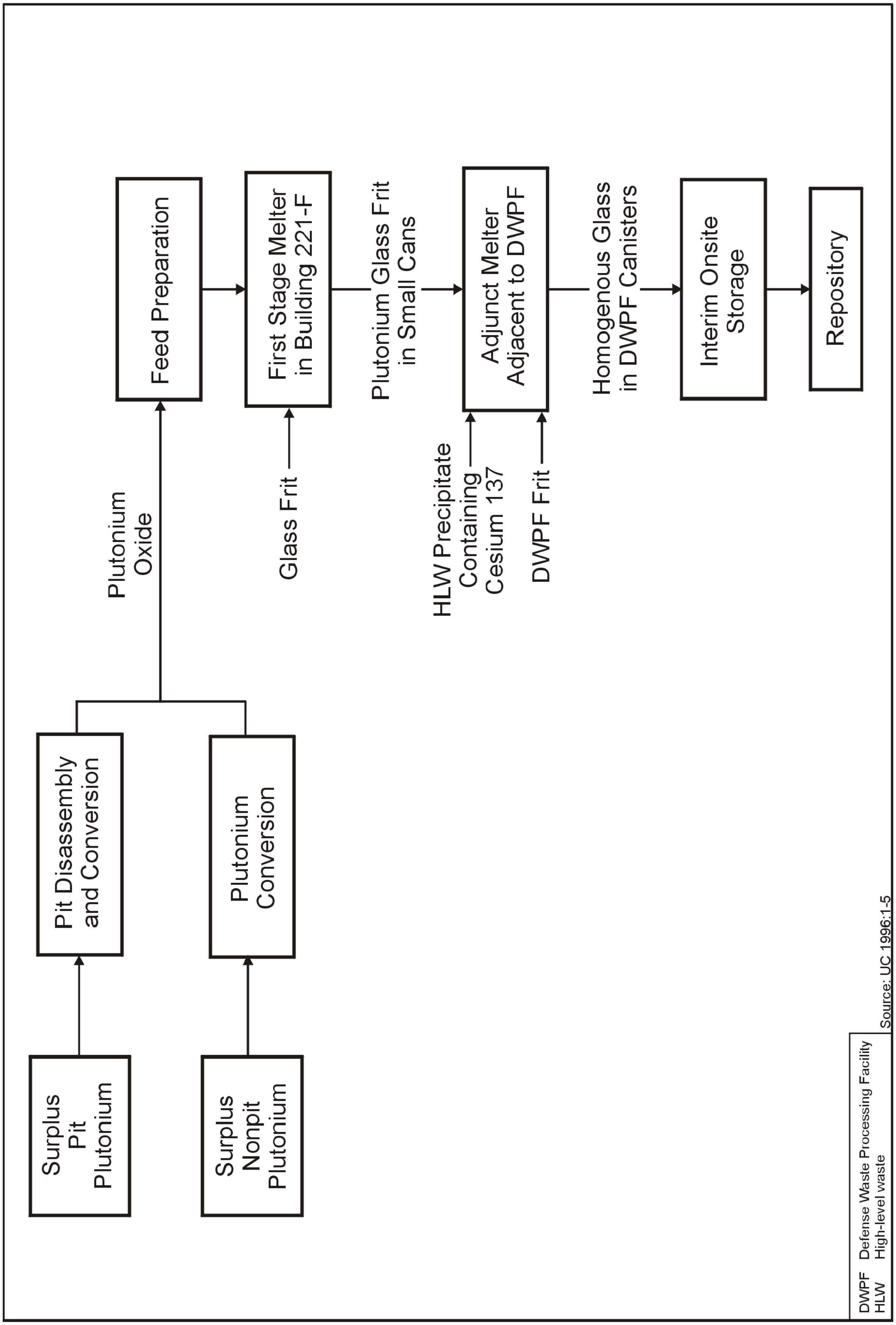

Figure C–1. Adjunct Melter Vitrification Process

C.4 REFERENCES

DOE (U.S. Department of Energy), 1996, *Storage and Disposition of Weapons-Usable Fissile Materials Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement*, DOE/EIS-0229, Office of Fissile Materials Disposition, Washington, DC, December.

UC (Regents of the University of California), 1996, *Alternative Technical Summary Report: Vitrification Adjunct Melter to DWPF Variant*, UCRL-ID-122660, L-120217-1, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Livermore, CA, August 26.

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